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## Viewing cable 06MANAGUA2343, CSE PRESIDENT CLAIMS ELECTIONS WILL BE

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06MANAGUA2343**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">06MANAGUA2343</a>	<a href="#">2006-10-23 18:57</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Managua</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758456.aspx>  
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INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 002343

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DEPT FOR WHA/CEN, USAID FOR LAC MARK SILVERMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/20/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [NU](#)  
SUBJECT: CSE PRESIDENT CLAIMS ELECTIONS WILL BE  
TRANSPARENT, COMPLAINS ABOUT QUICK COUNT

Classified By: Ambassador Paul Trivelli for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Ambassador and the magistrates of Nicaragua's Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) exchanged concerns regarding the November 5 national elections during a recent meeting at CSE headquarters. Ambassador urged the magistrates to assure that eligible voters can obtain the necessary voting documents before election day, allow international and national observers access to all key locations, and oppose any self-declaration of candidates before the official release of vote results. Ambassador also expressed concern regarding the apparently inequitable distribution of voting station official slots to the different political parties. The magistrates complained about Etica y Transparencia's plan to conduct a quick count, claiming that Etica is not impartial towards the CSE and any alternative tabulation of the vote could result in civil disturbances. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador and emboffs met with CSE magistrates on October 19 to discuss issues related to the November 5 national elections. The magistrates came to the meeting sporting casual clothing and CSE observation vests -- no doubt to show their dedication to performing the grubby field work necessary to ensure fair elections. In addition to CSE president Roberto Rivas, FSLN-affiliated magistrate Emmet Lang (seated at Rivas' right hand), and PLC magistrates Luis Benavides and Rene Herrera were present, among others. (Comment: At one point during the conversation, CSE chief of staff Rodrigo Barreto delivered a folded message to Rivas. Lang took the message from the table in front of Rivas, opened and read it in full view of the group. Lang's actions clearly demonstrated who really controls the CSE. End Comment.) In general, the meeting was cordial, and Barreto delivered our observation credentials after the discussion concluded.

Distribution of Voting Documents

¶3. (C) Ambassador commented that the elections can be judged free and fair only if voters are able to obtain the appropriate documents and exercise their suffrage. He asked Rivas if the CSE plans to use a bus and motorcycles provided by IFES to deliver voter/national ID cards (cedulas) and supplementary documents to voters in remote areas. Rivas equivocated, answering only that the CSE plans to open up municipal distribution centers on October 26-29 to facilitate the distribution of cedula and supplementary documents. He commented that the magistrates had discussed shipping unretrieved cedula and supplementary documents to the appropriate voting stations on election day, but that plan

was judged impractical due to security considerations. Rivas stated that voters would not be able to use a colilla (receipt given by the CSE when a voter applied for a cedula) because colillas do not have adequate anti-fraud features.

14. (C) Ambassador asked how the CSE plans to publicize its special weekend to facilitate cedula/supplementary document retrieval for voters. Rivas responded by asking for additional resources for a publicity campaign. Ambassador answered that IFES prepared a publicity campaign over two months ago, but the CSE has failed to approve it. Rivas became flustered, snapping at Rodrigo Barreto, and offered a lame excuse that the IFES campaign stressing cedulas is not really appropriate for that project.

#### Observer Access

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15. (C) Ambassador urged the magistrates to allow international and national observers access to all key locations, including the vote tabulation center. Rivas responded that the CSE has accredited over 16,000 national observers and 600 international observers. He claimed that "these elections are completely open, the CSE has nothing to hide." The vote tabulation computer center is a small place, Rivas explained, although the CSE will permit access to a limited number of international and national observers as well as official party poll watchers (fiscales). (Comment: Apparently Rivas has finally acquiesced to pressure from the OAS, European Union, USG and others to permit limited access to national observers to the vote tabulation center. End Comment.)

#### Self-Declarations of Victory on Election Day/Reporting Results

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16. (C) In response to rumors that FSLN candidate Daniel Ortega may use early vote results (expected to favor his party) to proclaim himself the victor, Ambassador asked the magistrates not to give credence to any such declarations. Rivas stated that the CSE does not have any authority to affirm a candidate's victory until the official results are determined. (Note: Benavides told the media late last week that "Nicaragua will have a new president in the morning" on November 6. End Note.)

17. (C) Rivas commented that the CSE will post incoming vote tallies on its web site, and that 85 percent should be reported by 10:00 a.m. on November 6. Regarding the process of official challenges ("impugnaciones") by party poll watchers, Rivas stated that he expects only about 140-150 voting stations (JRVs) out of over 11,000 will face impugnaciones. According to Rivas, most of the impugnaciones will be "stupid complaints," (e.g., a red car was parked outside the JRV) and only about 15-20 will be serious cases requiring resolution at the national level.

#### JRV Member Allocations

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18. (C) Ambassador noted that the distribution of official positions at the JRVs does not appear equitable and asked if the parties have any way to appeal the decisions. (Note: Each JRV is comprised of three members: a president, first member, and second members. Typically, the president and first member positions are allocated to designees from the two traditional parties (PLC and FSLN), while the second member positions are split between the "minority parties." The Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS) has protested the allocation of second member seats, claiming that 40 percent were given to the Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN), 40 percent to the Alternative for Change (AC), and only 20 percent to the MRS. End Note.)

19. (C) Rivas responded that the Departmental Electoral Councils (CEDs) appoint the members of the Municipal

Electoral Councils (CEMs), which in turn appoint the JRV officials. According to Rivas, the parties cannot appeal this "complicated procedure," although he claimed that the MRS simply did not nominate officials in areas where the party does not have a strong presence.

¶10. (C) Ambassador asked Rivas if the CSE will also train the alternate JRV officials, and he answered that he hopes the proprietary members will share their training with their alternates. Rivas claimed that JRV officials in Colombia do not receive any training at all, only instruction manuals.

#### Magistrates Rail Against EyT Quick Count

¶11. (C) Rivas, Lang, and Herrera all strongly criticized plans by Etica y Transparencia (EyT) to conduct a quick count for the presidential election on November 5. Rivas commented that the quick count plan "bothers" him and worried that the results could be inaccurate. Herrera warned that if the "real" election results do "not match people's expectations" but the quick count does, the conflicting information could "create a dangerous situation." Lang bluntly stated that the CSE does not trust EyT due to a history of conflict between the two institutions and "biased" reports released by EyT in the past. Lang claimed that EyT published a quick count after the 2001 elections that was eight points off the actual results. The magistrates did not respond to repeated offers to have EyT electoral experts explain the quick count methodology.

¶12. (C) Comment: Lang is mistaken. The EyT 2001 quick count results were only .02 percent different from the final vote tally, and the CSE actually requested that EyT release the quick count results before the release of the official vote tally to validate their own findings. The FSLN and PLC will have an unfair advantage in that they will know, through their hacks in the CSE, the results of the quick count before the other parties since EyT is legally bound to share the results with the CSE before any release. Local IFES director Rafael Lopez Pintor, who has been providing technical assistance to the CSE for almost a year, earlier told emboffs that the magistrates are behaving in an obstructionist manner because they are afraid that the pact parties (PLC and FSLN) will lose the elections and they will be replaced -- losing their obscenely bloated salary packages and benefits.

Without the constant vigilance of the donor/observer community and Nicaraguan civil society groups, the utterly politicized CSE would surely have made far less than the already minimal efforts to ensure free, fair, and transparent elections.

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